

SOVIET POLICY IX WARTIME

and sponsored shows. It also provided travel scholarships for some Iranian artists and regularly brought Soviet professors and academicians, sometimes of high caliber, to speak to Iranian audiences.

Hardly a day passed without the press giving notice of some cultural or artistic event at the society. The House of Culture, the headquarters of the society, was a meeting place for many Iranians. These were mainly students and younger intellectuals who were attracted by the prospect of free tuition and the stipends offered by the society and who were generally eager to hear something about Soviet life, economics, and government. Some of these Iranians were either outright Communists or sympathizers with Soviet doctrine, but the majority came simply to learn and hear something new.

It is difficult to judge exactly what motivated some Iranians in prominent positions to associate themselves with Soviet propaganda, but whether it was money, threats, self-insurance against future risks, or genuine friendship, some well-known figures were in close touch with the Cultural Society. Professor Said Xafisy, Secretary-General of the Iranian Academy of Arts and Letters, gave, apparently, both body and soul to the cultural *rapprochement* between Russia and Iran. He became Secretary-General of the Irano-Soviet Cultural Society and worked relentlessly for its success. In the winter of 1944-1945 Nafisy together with a few other professors was invited to visit Uzbekistan and there to participate in the ceremonies of the twentieth anniversary of that Soviet Socialist republic. Due publicity was given to this visit. After their return the professors launched an offensive of lectures praising Soviet achievements. In

August, 1944, the society began to publish its own organ, *Paya?n-i-Xo* ("New Messenger"), devoted exclusively to the cause of Soviet-Iranian friendship. Its editor was Madame Fatima Sayah, professor of the University of Teheran. She was a member of a well-known family and a relative of Hamid Sayah whose public career included such positions as Minister to Poland and frequent cabinet posts during the second World War. In 1943 Madame Sayah had founded a Women's Party, the aim of which was to raise the position and dignity of women in Iranian society. In view of her record and her prominence Madame Sayah's appointment as editor of the Soviet-sponsored publication was very significant. The society's activities were growing

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